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ANOTHER ENGLISH LETTER.

DECEMBER 11th, 1864.

A GENTLEMAN whom I met at the National Gallery while copying one of the "Turners," gave me an invitation to call at his house, and he would show me some Turner drawings, and a copy of Claude, by a countryman of mine, G. L. Brown. I called and had a treat. Among the drawings were four of the illustrations to Finden's Bible, about 6 by 8 in., exquisitely finished, one of them, the sublime "Babylon," magnificent beyond description. There is no use talking, they do knock everything else higher than a kite! The others were, "Joppa," "Desert of Sinai," with "Rock of Moses" and "Ramah," then there were about a dozen sketches, some of them quite large—beautiful effects of color—golden sunset skies with dark blue mountains—glowing effects of sunshine over Italian cities, with lovely blue along the quiet horizons.

After looking over all these, there was a copy of the *Liber Studiorum*, purchased from Turner for £40, now worth, I am told, £300. Most of the drawings for this work are at the South Kensington Museum done in sepia. The prints are fine, but not so generally finished as the drawings.

As for Brown, if he would copy nature as well as he copies Claude, he would do good work, but I suppose he thinks Claude is better (no doubt he is the easier). Knowledge sufficient to appreciate Turner will make you feel that Claude is childish and silly in comparison; but I am not surprised at his popularity; to the ignorant, his work must seem like a trick in legerdemain, wonderful in its deceptive reality, but to those who understand it, it is no reality at all. There are two famous works of his in the National Gallery, "The Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca,"

and "The Embarcation of the Queen of Sheba," with two Turners hung between them: "Dido building Carthage" and "Sunrise in a mist," the last, I like best. Of the "Carthage," I believe, Ruskin has expressed not a very high opinion. I quite agree; I do not care for any of his imitations of Claude, and this is perhaps the best.

In the exhibition of water colors (Old Society), an oval drawing of a female head, by W. Hunt, was beautiful in color and exquisite in finish. Birket Foster's drawings are the acme of the clever. Davidson's are rich in color and truthful. Upon the whole, I like his best among the landscapes, they are all simple subjects; nothing fine. The whole collection makes a nice show; most of the artists seem to agree in working for strong, pure color. They fail, principally, from not being able to draw. Naftel's work is elaborate, but hard and flat, with considerable awkwardness in drawing. I think they ought to do better, with Ruskin and Turner before their eyes to mark out the way.

There are exhibiting at present here two pictures of Holman Hunt's—"The After Glow in Egypt" and "London Bridge," both evidently faithful delineations of two widely different subjects. The subject of the first is an Egyptian maiden coming towards you from a grain field on the banks of the Nile, with a sheaf of wheat on her head, and a green jar in her hand. A flock of pigeons is flying about her; one clinging lightly to the sheaf, with its purple wings against the golden wheat; others picking up the seed at her feet. Behind her head is the warm, sunny sky, and the mountains, showing only as a narrow flush of rosy light in the far distance; nearer are some palm trees traced in

delicate green above the glowing gold, and some mounds with buildings on them to be above the floods. Then, the golden grain-field halfreaped, the sheaves stacked gleaming in the glowing light. The colors are brilliant enough for sunshine, yet there are no shadows towards you; the grain-field merges into rich green grass and weeds along the margin of a stagnant pool, which down among the rich colors reflects the upper blue sky. This part of the work is most admirable; the soft, mysterious forms of the vegetation, except where they are defined against the light, and the delicate gradation of color in the water, changing from purple to green, is lovely; and all this comes of watching nature, and losing yourself in her infinitude of beauty. The figure is life-size, and painted up with all the power of the palette, dark against the glowing back-ground. Her head covered, and her rich brown face enclosed, in a scarf of many colors; her arms bare,—with the right, she steadies the sheaf, with the other, supports the green jar,—with the brown color of her arm against the bright distance make a fine piece of color. Her arms above the elbows are covered with a blue (almost black) robe, which reaches nearly to the feet, and gives great brilliancy and force to the picture. In the immediate front, the soft, white breasts and purple wings of the pigeons contrast with the dark earth and green grass.

The "London Bridge" is very carefully painted, but I do not care for the subject;—perhaps being a Black-republican has something to do with it.* The effect of moonlight on London smoke is faithfully rendered.

Seddon's "Jerusalem" is at South Kensington; I like it much; it is very like Farrer.

* The subject of the picture is, "London Bridge illuminated in honor of the arrival of the Princess of Wales."

There are a great many Landseers, Leslies, Mulreadies. Leslie is fine. Landseer is best in his interiors and simple portraits. His out-door scenes are quite false; none of them do I like as well as Turner, and I should, if they were as well done. W. Hunt I like as well. Lance, Linnel, Creswick, and a host of others that I have seen, indicate no power of painting truthfully.

DECEMBER 24th, 1864.

Sir Joshua's work I like. "The Age of Innocence" is graceful and childlike; and there are five portraits of a child in different positions, called "angels;" with wings on their shoulders; just their heads, in one picture. I think them very lovely, never get tired of looking at them, there is such a sad, yearning expression about their little faces. One is gazing upward, another is looking modestly downward, another is looking towards you, its soul in its little eyes, and all so graceful and childlike! These "Angels" and the "Age of Innocence" are quite delicate and pure in color, but there are a number of portraits, some full length, and a Holy Family, very dark-black back-grounds, but all are fine, no claptrap.

Gainsborough I like. It is quite surprising to me how work so conventional in all respects can be worthy of admiration, and yet, I think, with Ruskin, it is worthy of great respect. It is very interesting to me to see all the pictures, those that have been familiar by the engravings in the "Vernon Gallery," and which I had so often wished to see; here they all are, and you cannot imagine with what zest I devoured them on my first visit. Here are Constable's "Valley Farm" and "Cornfield"—pictures that he has evidently worked on hard, but so unsatisfactory, for want of faithful drawing and color; so much idle and ignorant daubing with the brush; nevertheless, I like them better

than any of the landscapes here, except Turner and Gainsborough. Creswick, Lee and Linnel are very poor; I do not hesitate in saying I would as lief have a Hart or Shattuck.

Leslie is a thorough master of his art; everything is done with ease, a transient expression on a face, a smile or a frown, is caught without effort, and a little work goes a great way.

I hardly think I like Mulready so well. There seems a want of feeling in his work; all is manipulation. He seems to have done them to show how well he could do them, not caring for the subject. There are three or four chalk-drawings by him, of the nude figure, quite wonderful in their way. Being mere trials of skill, they are satisfactory.

There are a number of Stanfields. "Texel Island" is about the best; but I look at that, and think of the beautiful green water I saw coming up St. George's Channel, and wish he had painted it like that. All is so drab in color, gray and brown, with a bit of red or blue on the figures.

APRIL 4th, 1865.

Every one advises me to stay and see the Royal Academy Exhibition, now

that it is so near at hand; it opens the first week in May. I suppose there will be a great deal of rubbish; still, Millais will have two or three important works, which I should like to see, and then, I should get the best idea of the modern English School, which I am told I do not get from the present exhibition.

I shall be glad if it is so, for the British Institution and Society of Artists present, in my estimation, a most deplorable show. Among so many things (over 1,000) there is not one bit of truthful, earnest work; among six hundred persons not one growing weary of his false labor, or caring to strive for the beauty and glory of nature. Is it not sad? About the best thing was a study of a country church, by Anthony—careful, but wanting in color and effect. The difference between these and our Academy pictures, is in the amount of flaring color. I recollect your statement, that our artists dare not paint color. Well, the artists here, with no more knowledge of nature, *dare* to do it; and you may imagine the result! It is not that they have no light, for they have Turner, W. Hunt, and a number of "Preraphs," with Ruskin, but, that they love darkness best. Is it not strange they should be so blind?

JOSIAH WEDGWOOD.*

A HINT TO AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS.

A friend has put into our hands an address by the Honorable W. E. Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer, delivered at Burslem, Staffordshire, October 26, 1863, on the occasion of the laying the foundation stone of the Memorial Building in honor of Josiah Wedgwood, the famous English potter,

the manufacturer of the celebrated Wedgwood Ware,—an institution "intended to comprise a Museum, School of Science and Art, and Free Library, and designed to form a complete Educational Institute, peculiarly adapted to the requirements of the district in which it is situated.

Although this address is nearly two years old, it is new to us, and may be unknown to some of our readers. We therefore make a few extracts. They

* "Wedgwood," an Address by the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone, M. P., Chancellor of the Exchequer. London: John Murray, Albemarle street, 1863.